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ABSTRACT

Since 1992, through the Upcountry Writing Project, upstate South Carolina teachers have helped students in K-12 classrooms write for and about their communities. These teachers and students have learned much about what it takes to actually craft a genuine sense of place. By publishing, they have not only crafted pieces about their locales but have brainstormed, conferenced, revised, and proofread for days and sometimes months to contribute to their communities' cultural history and future. By placing writing at the center of the service learning project, the Upcountry Writing Project has blended service with writing to produce a powerful experience. This booklet delineates the workings of the Upcountry Writing Project and is divided into the following sections: Preface; Introduction; Finding Purpose through Publishing; The Growth Begins; Community Involvement; Sharing the Wealth; Reflection Activities; Celebration; Projects for Replications; Funding and Resources; Writing Strategies for Our Upcountry; and Conclusion. (Contains 10 references.) (NKA)

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LINKING LEARNING WITH LIFE

Upcountry Stories

Students Serve Through Writing

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Upcountry Stories

Students Serve Through Writing

by Rhea Galati and Bea Bailey

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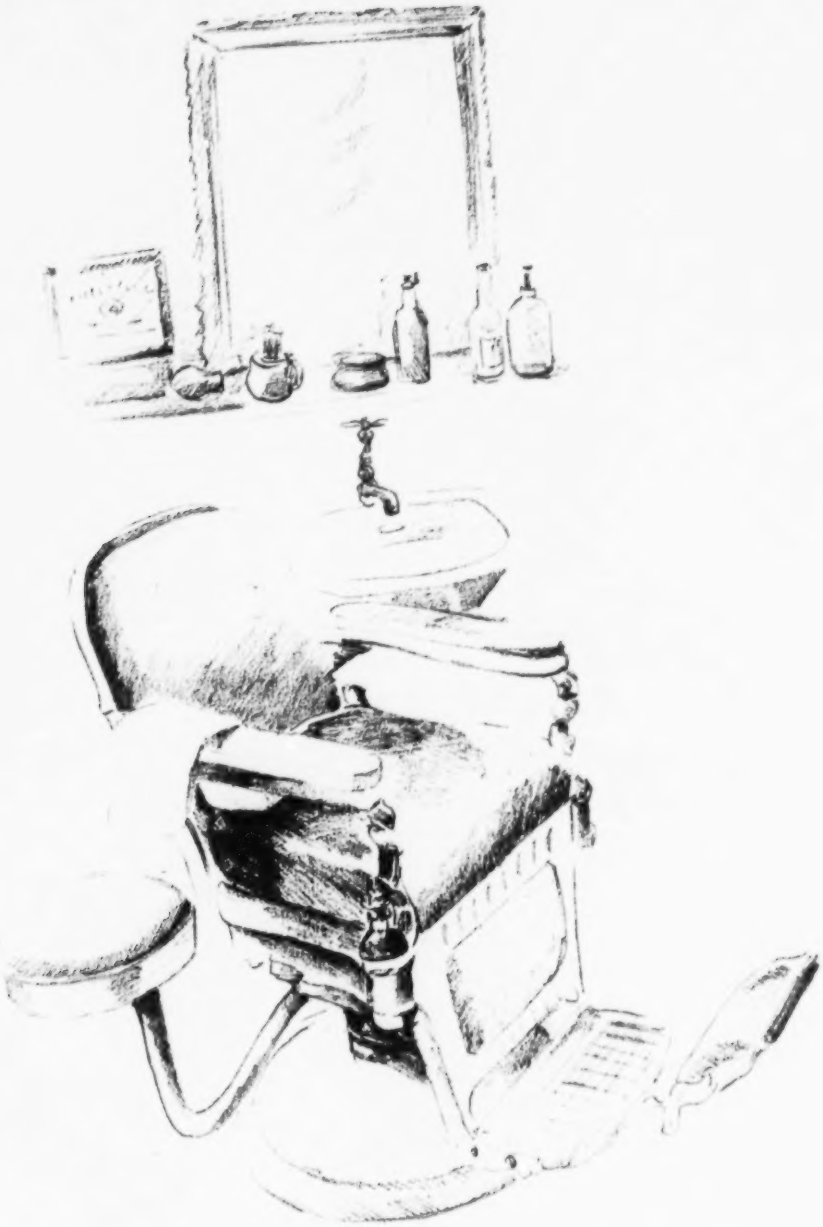


Preface

Since 1992, through the Upcountry Writing Project, upstate South Carolina teachers have helped students in K-12 classrooms write for and about their communities. These teachers and students have learned much about what it takes to actually craft a genuine sense of place. More importantly, however, is that these same teachers and students have served their communities by sharing their work in local and national forums. By publishing, they have not only crafted pieces about their locales but have brainstormed, conferenced, revised, and proofread for days and sometimes months in order to contribute to their communities' cultural history and future. Through publishing their work, they also serve the community by delighting readers of many persuasions and ages.

By placing writing at the center of the service learning project, the Upcountry Writing Project has blended service with writing to produce a powerful experience.

By matching the ASLER Standards for Service Learning (1993) with the activities of the Upcountry Writing Project as we have below, the reader will see that there is significant evidence to show this connection.

As defined by ASLER, service learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active articulation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that

- meet actual community needs—publishing for a region that delights in and respects local stories.
- are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community—newspaper staffs, chambers of commerce, school business partners, community experts and storytellers as well as the reading public became active participants in the Upcountry Writing Project.

- are integrated into each young person's academic curriculum—students met essential national and state curricular standards related to composition; their pieces were not composed for mere extra credit; they were often major enterprises within a unit of study.
- provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity—the Upcountry Writing Project advocates a process writing model that includes a reflection component that is built into the composing process itself.
- provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities—students used writing process skills and knowledge to create real publications for real audiences within their own communities and beyond.
- enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom—a major component of the Upcountry Writing Project was that students were expected to go beyond the classroom walls by publishing in public forums.
- help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others—a focus on a real audience within the writing process helps students become sensitive to their needs as readers (Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform [ASLER], 1993).

Our purpose in this publication is to share our experiences with the Upcountry Writing Project in the hopes that you will see ways in which your students also can serve their communities through their writing.

Bea Bailey and Rhea Galati

Introduction

The upstate of South Carolina is not much like the well-known low country that includes the golf mecca of Myrtle Beach and the colonial city of Charleston, the regal city that still sits by the sea. Instead, the upstate, once referred to as the "backcountry" or "upcountry," was once home to the lower Cherokee nation, a place that includes present-day Greenville, Pickens, Anderson, and Oconee—Carolina's Piedmont and mountain regions. Ben Robertson (1993), author of *Red Hills and Cotton: An Upcountry Memory*, captures a bit of the spirit of the place in his day, around 1940:

> I and all the families of my kinfolks lived for nearly two centuries in two old and fertile valleys at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the northwest part of our paradise—the foothills, and in the valley, and in the plains, and in the wilderness, and in the south country. It was a land of smokehouses and sweet-potato patches, of fried pies and dried fruit and of lazy big bumblebees buzzing in the sun—a country of deep dark pools, of the soaring spirit, of little rooms stored with apples, and of old Confederates and tenant farmers and colored people and swarms of politicians and preachers. An ideal country for cotton farmers and dreamers; a brooding great country that had caught the sight of God. You can see a wedge of shelddrakes, a cloud drifting in southern space, and there before you are the old, contemplative mountains, a long range sifted with a powder that was blue. Sometimes the valleys are filled with showers, melting into yellow light, and in the evening in the depths of the wood thrushes sing. It was disturbing country that rested us and somehow never let us rest. There seemed to be a divine discontent, a searching for its soul. (p. 5–6)

Using many passages of his upcountry reflection as an inspiration and model for writing, teachers and students have sustained Robertson's mission to preserve and even create a bit of the upcountry through service to it, by capturing images and insights about it through writing. Service learning, now a national curricular movement, requires the blending of both service and learning goals so that both occur and are enriched by each other (Finney, 1997). The Upcountry Writing Project, which is shared in the pages that follow, illustrates through its various professional development initiatives how K-12

teachers and students have mined the heritage of the upcountry by publishing essays, poems, persuasive arguments, plays, short stories, and readable research reports. As teachers and students worked together in supportive writing communities, they began to master the basics of the composing process, basics that permeate both national and state language arts standards. At the same time, the service learning standards are clearly met as well through the many facets of these writing projects.

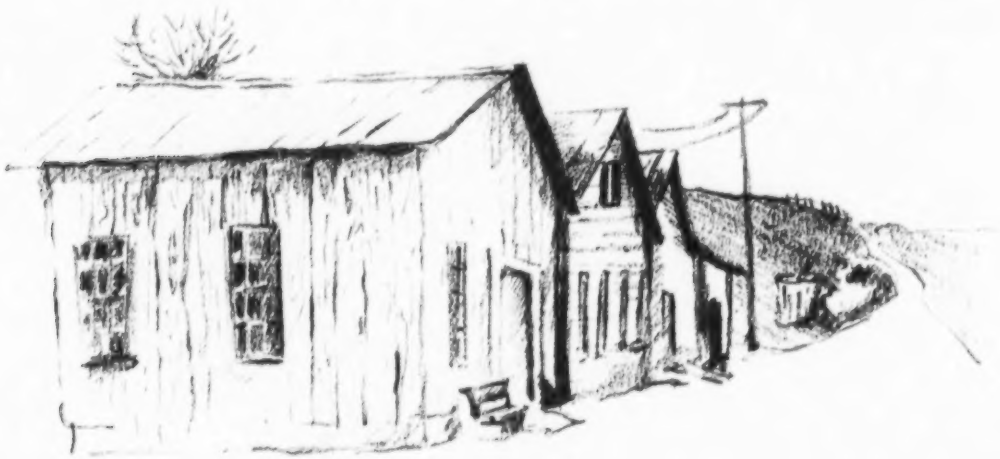
The processes of writing and service learning are incorporated into summer and school-year institutes, where teachers come together for an extended period of time to share ways to write about and for their upcountry as they develop strategies for helping students do the same. A variety of outlets have been used for publication of their writings.

- *The Pickens Sentinel*, a local weekly, publishes teacher and student pieces in a full-page spread entitled "Our Upcountry: Teachers and Students Write About Place." To date, *The Sentinel* has published over four hundred teacher and student pieces.
- Twice that many have been developed and/or submitted for in-school publication or for other state and national audiences.
- In the spring, teachers, students, and community members gather for a luncheon or dinner celebration as students share their stories and receive recognition for their outstanding contributions as preservers and creators of the county's perception of itself.
- The Anderson Chamber of Commerce has also published several upcountry stories on their county's web site.
- Nine edited anthologies of teachers' writings have been circulated and about three times that many for student pieces.
- Several outstanding upcountry teachers have helped students

publish full-length local histories.

- A teacher has helped students develop a national award-winning book, *We're On Our Way to See King Bear,* a journey book that encourages both preservation of national resources and respect for diversity, a virtue that many of our Appalachian students recognize as being vitally important to their own development.

Publishing such pieces about place for an audience beyond the classroom engenders an enthusiasm that students rarely experience through more formulaic academic writing. Perhaps for the first time, some students experience the power knowledge affords them. They have a story to tell or information and insights to share with audiences who are interested in what they have to share. These young people begin to examine their communities more closely as they begin to ask thought-provoking questions that require research and interaction with the community. The real-world audience inspires them to write and rewrite their pieces so that the composing process becomes a handy way to develop ideas and images that are worth sharing.



Finding Purpose Through Publishing

The key to reaching students of any subject area today is to give meaning to the learning. The question "Why are we doing this?" has to have a relevant answer for today's youth in today's classroom. For students to experience the motivation necessary to invest in an endeavor, they must attach personal meaning to that project. As researchers Dorman and Dorman (1997) put it, "Students who see no relevant connection between learning and life don't try to store the learning for life, but only through the final exam." When students write about and for their community, they become engaged. For example, students in the class working on *We're On Our Way to See King Bear* crafted their illustrations and story line over several months. Of course, they hoped to win an award, but as their opening dedication and final epilogue suggest, they also wanted to share their newfound insights about natural wonders and the people who conserve them. They stated their feelings clearly in the Dedication and Epilogue of *We're On Our Way to See King Bear:*

Dedication

We would like to dedicate this book to all the animals that make their homes in the Jocassee Gorges, and to the people who protect them.

Epilogue

Even though this story is fiction, the setting is real. The Jocassee Gorges, comprised of 32,000 acres of forestland, are located in the northwestern corner of South Carolina, practically in our school's backyard. Recently purchased by the state government, discussion is now underway as to how to best use this area. Over 1,200 species of endangered animals have been documented as living in this area. As Rusty and his friends discovered, each animal is unique, and deserves a place to live and grow. That's why we feel this area should be protected. We urge you to help protect the wildlife habitats in your area, too.

The discovery of real applications of their classroom knowledge gives meaning to the abstract skills tied to the academic world (Herzberg, 1997). Students rarely commit to learning or academic skills without that personal connection. This connection is often

established when students engage in meaningful writing tasks with audiences beyond the classroom (Bacon, 1997; Heilker, 1997; Dorman & Dorman, 1997; Brack & Hall, 1997; Myers, 1996).

The Upcountry Writing Project allows teachers and students in primary, middle, and secondary schools to also take more responsibility for their education and develop greater self-confidence and sharper communication skills. Below are just a few of the ways that students evidence this responsibility, self-confidence, and communications savvy. Students

- investigate local history, lore, community interaction, local and regional artistic expression, political and social elements and events, and ecological needs past and present through community interviews
- examine and analyze historical, religious, legal, governmental, geological, geographical, and personal documents
- shape stories with personal meaning into feature articles
- help preserve all aspects of the culture and the history of the community
- explore newly-formed relationships that cross generational, cultural, and social boundaries

The blending of service learning and writing about the upcountry creates a link that allows the students to explore their communities, examine new methods of communication, and grow as writers and individuals. With this program, writing becomes the center of the service learning rather than one aspect of it—like the reflection component that often is realized through journal writing. Placing writing at the center of service learning can enhance students' understanding of the purposes for **personal writing** by

- making it relevant to students by providing a real-world audience, such as a local readership that values their personal stories about people and places they know

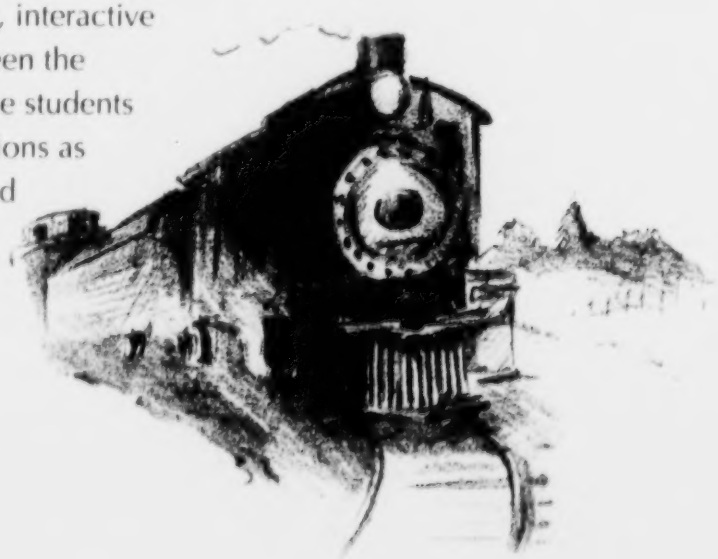
- demonstrating that it has real-world applications in public forums
- experiencing firsthand the power of the written word when parents and community members clap or cry after public readings of their pieces
- allowing at-risk students to become experts on their chosen topics, giving them a renewed confidence in their personal knowledge

school writing by

- meeting and surpassing the classroom objectives while addressing the needs of the community
- helping them improve performance on state performance-based assessment and writing proficiency exams
- providing interdisciplinary publishing assignments that connect writing to all disciplines, demonstrating its vital role in all subject areas

community writing by

- giving students opportunities to conduct historical research, ecological investigations, or enter into public debate about local social issues
- creating a positive, interactive relationship between the community and the students that spans generations as well as cultural and social boundaries



The Growth Begins

With writing at its center, the Upcountry Writing Project is a program that can expand across the curriculum and through elementary grades to high schools. This project allows writing to become the central focus of various disciplines while engaging students in meaningful community inquiry and service through publishing. Below are possibilities for serving through publishing that Upcountry Writing Project teachers have found successful.

Making History Come Alive

Students research a local historical element (in this case a local stream engine that no longer runs through the town) in order to create a record of its contribution to the area and to also pay tribute to its service. Elementary students created stories and composed a song memorializing the train and the role it played in the community's history. Both the stories and the song were then recorded on a CD, with the second graders reading and singing their original compositions with the help of the music department. The students, with the help of the art department, also designed the CD cover. This writing project encourages local exploration of place and culture through historical research. It also helps students develop a sense of pride and appreciation for their community. This project could be adapted for practically any grade level.

- Language Arts. Conduct interviews with community members who were involved in the operation of locomotives from this era, or with individuals who had experience with the train either as passengers or as recipients of Christmas-run gifts from the railroad company. Then, write a whole class story incorporating the research and interview materials to the train's significance in the town. Write thank you notes to the individuals who assisted in the research and attended a tea party hosted by the students in celebration of the completion of the entire project. Students describe their research to their e-mail pen pals using first person.

- Science. Create a knowledge base of the working design of a steam engine. Interview adults with the practical knowledge of the steam engine (e.g., train engineers, science teachers, and production engineers). Then publish these interviews like Studs Terkel did in *Working*.

- Library Skills. Research the historical significance of the transformations that made the community obsolete. In this case, the students explored the history of steam engine mechanics, technological transformations from steam power to diesel, and replacement of rail delivery by the trucking industry.

- Geography. Locate the train's particular run through the community and the various other runs that it traveled.

- Social Studies. Research the history of train travel and transportation and its impact on rural societies.

- Math. Calculate the length of the train's complete route, the length of time the run took, the average amount of cargo it carried, and the number of passengers the train could transport on an average run.

- Computer Discovery. Research the progression of trains from steam to diesel using Internet web sites. Type and edit the stories, the song, and the thank you notes created in language arts. Display the students' stories and song on the school's web page.

- Art. Design and draw a picture of the train and the community's interaction with the train to serve as the CD cover. Draw pictures to be combined with the thank you notes and bind these to create booklets to be distributed at the tea party.

- Performing Arts. Perform the original song and have readings of the original stories at a performing arts festival hosted by the school.

- Music. Compose the lyrics and music for the original song featured on the CD. Sing the original song at school-sponsored functions.

Examining Cultural Change Through Newspaper Articles

Students will engage in community inquiry as they compose newspaper articles that could preserve the culture of the region, highlight an important and perhaps subtle community, question changes within their community, or determine feasibility of community changes by considering the costs in changes, both economic and cultural.

Examples could include publishing a newspaper article about the significance of a nationally renowned nineteenth century architect's structures, invasion of chain stores and their effects on local businesses, neglected yet historically significant graveyards, loss of significant businesses and entertainment facilities, conversion of historically significant homes into bed and breakfast establishments, and/or interest in local restaurants and community facilities to deter long commutes for dances, proms, and formal occasions.

The student-generated articles will be published in the local newspaper to serve the general readership. This project was developed for and created by high school juniors but could be applied to many grade levels.

- Language Arts. Conduct interviews with individuals who are knowledgeable in the students' areas of interest. Write newspaper articles incorporating the research and interview materials collected by the students pertaining to the particular topics and their impact on the local area. Write thank you letters to the individuals who assisted in the research and participated in the interviews.

- Social Studies. Research the historical significance of local architecture and structures through the use of deeds, land grants, wills, and other historical documents housed in the local courthouse and historical societies. Research the contributing factors to the closure of businesses and entertainment facilities through the use of newspaper archives, legal transactions, and other historical documents housed in the local courthouse and historical societies. Research church records and land deeds to determine the ownership and significance of abandoned graveyards. Participate in a walking tour of the historically significant districts of the local town or city. Do these activities as preludes before drafting the newspaper article.

- Library Skills. Research the financial and cultural impact of chain stores on rural communities and preexisting businesses. Research the significance and clarification of grave markers and military monuments. Then, incorporate the significant research materials into the newspaper articles to give them validity and significance.

- Math/Economics. Calculate the amount of materials produced by local, culturally significant businesses that have been replaced or driven out of business. Calculate the amount of lost revenue represented by this work stoppage.

- Science. Establish a knowledge base of the culturally significant industries representative of the local area. Examples include the operation of a water-powered gristmill and the cultivation and distribution of various agricultural crops specific to the local area.

- Computer Discovery. Research the various topics using Internet web sites. Type and edit the newspaper articles and the thank you notes created in language arts. Display the students' articles on the school's web page.

- Art. Create original artwork or photographs to accompany the newspaper articles.
- Performing Arts. Write and perform skits focused on the cultural losses suffered within the community in the name of progress and the cultural richness that still remains in the local area.
- Journalism. Create, edit, and publish newspaper articles in conjunction with a local newspaper.
- Speech/Communications. Create an oral presentation using the information generated through research and interviews to present to concerned social and historical organizations.

Neglected Graveyards

Students physically refurbish and research the historical significance of a neglected graveyard. This project was developed for and created by emotionally-challenged high school students but could be applied to any grade level.

- Science. Establish a knowledge base of the various types of burial practices of the area. This might include the various containers used for burial, the burial customs, and the effects of plants, water, and weather on gravesites. Establish a knowledge base of the restoration methods available to refurbish this graveyard. Maintain an archaeological journal to record knowledge, steps, and future goals.
- Library Skills. Research burial customs commonly used in this region. Research restoration methods used to refurbish graveyards. Then, share this information in a Power Point presentation at the local museum.

- Math. Measure the length and width of each grave to help establish the sex and age of the individuals buried there. Create a detailed sketch of the various grave markers in their cemetery location; then, write about the hypotheses that might be made based on the evidence.
- Geography. Identify and map the entire graveyard including individual gravesites and significant landmarks. Then, explain each feature of the map in a written brochure that enables visitors to appreciate the site.
- Language Arts. Reflect on the restoration process through journal entries. Write and publish articles that appear in a local museum newsletter about the various restoration stages of the local graveyard and their implications.
- Social Studies. Research church records and land deeds to determine the ownership and significance of the abandoned graveyard. Use this information to build a reliable, nonfiction account of the possible nature of the community that created the graveyard. This can be a piece published in a final project documentation workbook that can be shared with school and community media centers.
- Art. Create headstone rubbings from the existing gravestones to try to establish the identities of the individuals buried there. Make an Excel spread sheet of the data; then, reformat the data in a way that is easy for visitors to understand; this, too, could be included in a community brochure.
- Performing Arts. Perform a rededication ceremony upon the completion of the restoration project. Share original reflections, stories, songs, and research at this important community forum; make sure the program overview handout is clear, helpful, and nicely formatted.

- Music. Perform various hymns at the rededication ceremony; then, seek permission to republish these hymns, noting their probable significance to the community now buried at the site.

Celebrating Musical Traditions That Link Past and Present

Students examine performance culture and history—the instruments people played, the European influence evident in local ballads and dances, and the meshing of various cultures through music. Students will generate newspaper articles showcasing their research and participate in a celebration ceremony that features professional and student performances. This project was developed for and created by high school students but could be applied to any grade level.

- Performing Arts. Perform culturally significant dances and play regionally specific instruments at a celebration ceremony. Write and perform a play examining the blending of cultures through music, dance, and song.
- Music. Perform culturally significant songs demonstrating the fusing of cultures and the outside influences at a celebration ceremony.
- Art. Create original artwork that celebrates the unique performance history of the region. Create original artwork or photographs to accompany the newspaper articles. Design original posters and flyers advertising a celebration ceremony.
- Language Arts. Conduct interviews with musicians, performers, and singers who are knowledgeable in the students' area of interest. Write newspaper articles incorporating the research and interview materials collected by the students pertaining to the particular topics and their impact on the local performing arts. Write thank you letters to the individuals who assisted in the research and participated in the interviews.

- Social Studies. Research the historical and newspaper archives for information pertaining to the performance history of the region. Research church archives for information pertaining to singing schools and shape-note singing.
- Library Skills. Research cultural connections to particular dances, songs, and instruments such as clogging, buck dancing, Scottish ballads or African chants which have been passed down orally, dulcimers, mouth harps, and steel drums. Research the origin of particular dances, songs, and instruments.
- Geography. Identify the origin of the significant instruments, dances, and songs on a world map. Then, combine the map with the research information generated to create a catalog of information to be bound and placed in the local community and school media centers to be used as a research source.
- Computer Discovery. Research the various topics using Internet web sites. Type and edit the newspaper articles and the thank you letters created in language arts. Display the students' articles on the school's web site.
- Journalism. Create, edit, and publish newspaper articles in conjunction with a local newspaper.
- Science. Establish a knowledge base of the construction of the musical instruments specific to this region and their mechanical workings. Discuss the findings of this research in a booklet showcasing all the various instruments using the format of science-based writing. This project and booklet may be displayed during local and state science fairs.

- Math. Calculate the beats and rhythms of various culturally significant songs and compare them to determine the similarities and merging patterns. Then, students can recreate the instruments, using household materials such as tin cans, fine grade wire, and wooden boxes. A detailed instruction booklet should be created by each student and include information on assembly, tuning, and acoustical patterns of the instrument. The instruments and their instruction booklets could be placed in the school's display case for viewing, and the students could perform using the instruments during an assembly of parents, students, and faculty.

Community Involvement

Community involvement is essential with a community inquiry writing project that encourages service learning. Through the students' research and interviews, a bond develops within the community that spans generational, social, and cultural boundaries. This process highlights the historical places and the elders in the area while preserving the culture and creating a sense of pride in the local community. The collaboration of students and community members can be realized in the following ways:

- Members of the community with specific knowledge of lost arts or current skills can be invited into the classrooms to share their knowledge. Examples of these would be a train conductor, a gristmill operator, a student of a one-room schoolhouse, a shape-note singer from a singing school, and a self-taught musician who specializes in an antique instrument.
- Members of the community with specific knowledge beneficial to the students in the completion of their projects can be invited into the classrooms to share their knowledge. Examples of these would be forest rangers, environmentalists, naturalists, and graphic artists.
- Community members who own historical homes or buildings could conduct tours of their property.
- Social and historical organizations in the community could open their archives for examination by the students, and members of the organizations could assist the students with research.
- Courthouse employees could conduct instructional sessions on the research methods to employ while searching government documents.
- Students could visit nursing homes to conduct interviews with the residents concerning the particular topics of the students' research.

- Practitioners of vanishing arts could instruct students on the process, its history and purpose, and its value. Examples of this would be playing the dulcimer or mouth harp, creating various forms of folk art, and "laying people out" for burial.
- Students could participate in field trips that introduce them to the culturally and geographically significant areas of their community.

Sharing the Wealth

Writing for and about the community is rooted in the idea of sharing the finished product in a celebration on shared culture and shared knowledge. This establishment of a common link is beneficial to both the students and the community at large. The students are given a voice and a central position in the community, and the community members in attendance feel the students' sense of respect as they share community stories. This sharing of the wealth can be realized in the following ways:

- Students' newspaper articles could appear in the local newspaper.
- Students can enter their projects in state and national contests.
- Students' articles could appear in newsletters and other publications associated with the school system and education departments.
- Students' newspaper articles could appear in the school newspapers.
- Local radio stations could feature students' pieces on the human-interest broadcasts.
- Students could present their finished works to the social and historical organizations.
- Students' articles, songs, and artwork could be showcased in school or community-sponsored fine arts festivals.
- Students' articles, songs, and artwork could be showcased at local nursing homes and retirement communities.
- Students' articles and projects could be featured on school web sites.
- Students' articles, songs, artwork, and research materials can be assembled as a museum within the school for PTO/PTA meetings, open house, or family night.
- Students' articles, songs, artwork, and research materials can be assembled in a local museum for a special show.
- Students can participate in local historical festivals, displaying their articles, research, and artwork.

Reflection Activities

The reflection process is the stage that allows the students an opportunity to think critically about their finished product and their writing/service experiences. This is a structured time for students to think about their experiences and learn from them. Students examine the entire project and evaluate the project's successes and failures as a whole. The shared observations, both positive and negative, by all project members promote improvement and growth for the development of other projects (Duckenfield & Swanson, 1992). Reflection activities can be realized in the following ways:

- Reflection Through Writing. Various forms of writing can be employed to assist with student reflection. Personal questionnaires can be distributed throughout the project. An example of the use of these questionnaires occurred during an extensive examination of how progress had changed a community. Students examined their individual progress toward the final product, the problems they encountered, and the surprising successes the students achieved after their initial research had been conducted. This evaluation also required the students to reflect on how successful the research had been and how useful the materials they had collected would be to the end product they envisioned. The students were also asked to suggest methods of improvement for the research process. Another questionnaire requiring similar reflection was required after the students had conducted their personal interviews and again after their rough drafts of the articles had been submitted. A final evaluation of the project was conducted after the completed products had been published, and, through this evaluation, the students offered various useful suggestions about the project. One example of this concerned the suggestion that field trips be made to the courthouse and the historical society as a class so logistics of where materials were located and how to access the materials could be determined. Then when the students arrived to work independently, they did not waste valuable time learning the process rather than conducting research.

Personal journals may also be employed to provide personal reflection throughout the project. Teachers should schedule structured time for journal reflection, and students can be provided with prompts to guide them in this reflection. Again, these reflections should take place at critical points in the project and invite suggestions for improvement from the students. The teacher should monitor these journals to incorporate student suggestions as soon as possible and address any problems that arise.

- Reflection Through Verbal Communication. The use of discussion groups as part of the reflection process encourages verbal communication skills and allows students who may struggle with the written word to have an active, positive role in the reflection aspect of the project. This method of reflection is particularly successful with younger children, who may not be able to capture all their insights in writing but who can articulately express their observations verbally. During a verbal reflection session with a group of second graders who created original stories and a song that was recorded on a CD, the students discuss such intricate topics as the preservation of their town's history and improvements the town had realized because the train had traveled through it.

Verbal reflection can also be beneficial while the students are on the site of their project. A group of teens that refurbished an abandoned graveyard, conducted their reflection process in the graveyard itself. The discussion was stimulated as the students looked around them at the work that had been completed and the work that remained. Students could make their points with physical examples. The problems could be analyzed and examined firsthand to determine solutions.

Celebration

The culminating celebration of the students' hard work and final product is an event to unite the teachers, the students, the parents, and the community members and bring closure to the project. The students are recognized for their efforts and accomplishments. This also provides an opportunity for the community as a whole to recognize the service the students have provided and the contributions they have made (Duckenfield & Swanson, 1992). With the Upcountry Writing Project, this phase may have many layers.

Individual Publication. Various forms of publication are realized through the Upcountry Writing Project. Each student receives recognition and praise for this accomplishment. The student pieces have appeared in

- the local newspapers
- newsletters and school sponsored publications
- Chamber of Commerce web site and other local and school web sites
- nationally published articles written by teachers
- nationally published books the students created themselves

Students also receive recognition from the community on an individual basis as the friends, relatives, and neighbors acknowledge the publication.

School Recognition. Students can be honored within individual schools for their publication and accomplishments. Examples of this type of recognition could include

- naming students who publish as Student of the Week
- interviewing students who participated in the project on the school's cable news
- featuring the students' project in the school's newspaper
- recognizing the students' project on the school's marquee

Community Recognition. Including the community as part of the celebration is another method of strengthening the bond fostered by service learning. This type of celebration affords the schools and the parents an opportunity to come together in a positive climate and to strengthen the commitment to the students and the community as a whole. Examples of this type of recognition could include a public celebration

- at the site of the project such as the graveyard rededication service
- which acknowledged the outstanding accomplishments of the students such as the celebration after a book written by a group of elementary students was accepted for publication by a national publishing company
- where students read their pieces or display their research and artwork for the public

Countywide Recognition. An end-of-the-year celebration could be established to celebrate the accomplishments of all the students, countywide, who participated in the Upcountry Writing Project and pay special tribute to the most outstanding works. Awards could be given to the top three projects in the various age groups. This celebration could include all the partners involved in bringing this project to completion.

- Students could read their pieces and present their research.
- Community members who have been featured in the projects or have assisted in bringing the project into being could perform or be recognized.
- The parents and teachers could acknowledge the hard work and productivity of the students through their attendance.
- Leading citizens and businesses can champion the student writing by serving as sponsors for a sit-down meal that honors students, teachers, and schools.

Projects for Replication

The fusing of service learning and writing through community writing programs has added a meaningful component to classroom learning, and meaning appears to be the key that unlocks the door to student engagement. Once the students see purpose for their writing and realize there is a real-world audience to appreciate their efforts, they become excited about the process and the possibilities. The empowerment that is realized as formerly unsuccessful students become experts of their subjects and the walls of the classroom expand to encompass the entire community is incredible. Below are some of the service learning projects realized through the Upcountry Writing Project.

- Write, layout, and publish a book that provides the community with vital information. A fifth grade class published a book concerning the dependence of local animals on the wilderness areas of the county, and a national publishing company picked it up for publication—*Kids Are Authors* award-winning texts published by *Scholastic Magazine*, 1999.
- Take a field trip to a local botanical garden or national wildlife preserve and create informative newspaper articles highlighting the importance of such facilities and the benefits the community derives from them.
- Take a field trip to local historical sites and create informative newspaper articles highlighting the importance of such facilities and the benefits the community derives from them.
- Research the community's past through individual lives, local businesses, and forgotten historical sites and events. Create articles and artwork that chronicle the county's history as they create a respect for knowledge, tradition, and a past that should be preserved.
- Create an original play incorporating the historical research regarding the community and perform it for the student body and the general public.

- Research, map, and narrate a walking tour of historically significant areas of the community.
- Identify, research, and create historical markers denoting neglected or forgotten historical sites within the community.
- Create a classroom "museum" which highlights the students' research on a particular topic. Some examples would be the first doctors in the area, the first businesses in the area, the first schools in the area, and the first forms of entertainment in the area.
- Write, layout, and publish picture books and storybooks that highlight important events and people in the community for younger students.
- Create informative skits highlighting the students' research and articles to perform for social studies classes in the lower grades.
- Create informative skits highlighting the students' research and articles to perform at nursing homes and retirement communities.
- Using student-produced research and articles, create quilt squares depicting significant people and events of the area and quilt them into a wall hanging.

Funding and Resources

National Writing Project

Funding sources abound for local writing projects that have specific community service aims. School districts might first check to see if a National Writing Project (NWP) site is in the vicinity. NWP has over 180 sites (www.nwp.org) that might support community writing with a service learning dimension. In fact, over the last five years, the National Writing Project has provided funding through the Clemson Writing Project, which appropriated specific budgetary items for sustained inservice initiatives related to the Upcountry Writing Project. In addition, they also provided funding in the form of small mini-grants for Rural Sites Network activities. Each year NWP gets federal support to provide funding for its local sites. The local sites, connected to a college or university fiscal center, then provide matching support. This matching support usually is typically divided between the university and surrounding school districts. The university provides instructional leadership and administrative support for the initiative.

Universities With Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs are often eager to meet the needs of classroom teachers by offering courses that are paid for either by state funds or district funds. A public school district, for example, could request that a course be offered to help teachers learn inquiry writing techniques through a writing workshop while also developing unit designs that would steer students toward the same inquiry experiences. Typically, a central office staff development leader shapes the final agreement for a course offering in the district.

Grants for Innovative Language Arts Initiatives

- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

  At www.ncte.org, teachers can find a variety of grant opportunities for innovative instructional programs as well as funding for research on those innovative programs. For example, the Cultivating New Voices Among Scholars of Color Grant enables diverse teacher-researchers to create and research language arts programs. The Grants-in-Aid Program assists researchers who might choose to collaborate with writing teachers on projects such as inquiry writing. Finally, the Teacher-Researcher Program is ideally suited for the classroom teacher who might have an interest in generating and then reflecting upon the impact of a schoolwide writing initiative that explores the ecology and cultural makeup of a local community.

- General Education Grants Internet Sites

  U.S. Department of Education Discretionary Grant Application Packages for Currently Open Grant Competitions. Includes a list of currently open grant competitions along with closing dates, application information, and links to appropriate forms. U.S. Department of Education Grants Information: http://www.ed.gov/GrantApps/

  School Grants. Contains information on currently available K-12 grants, grant-writing tips, sample proposals, related links, more: http://www.schoolgrants.org

  Focus on Fundraising. Resources for educators on locating grants and grant-related information: http://www.geocities.com/world_of_websites/archive/fundraising.html

  The Foundation Center. The Center provides a comprehensive and up-to-date database on foundations and corporate giving

programs, and publishes *The Foundation Directory*—the classic reference work for grant seekers—and some 50 other directories, guides, and research reports. Information from the database is available electronically through custom searching and online services: http://fdncenter.org/

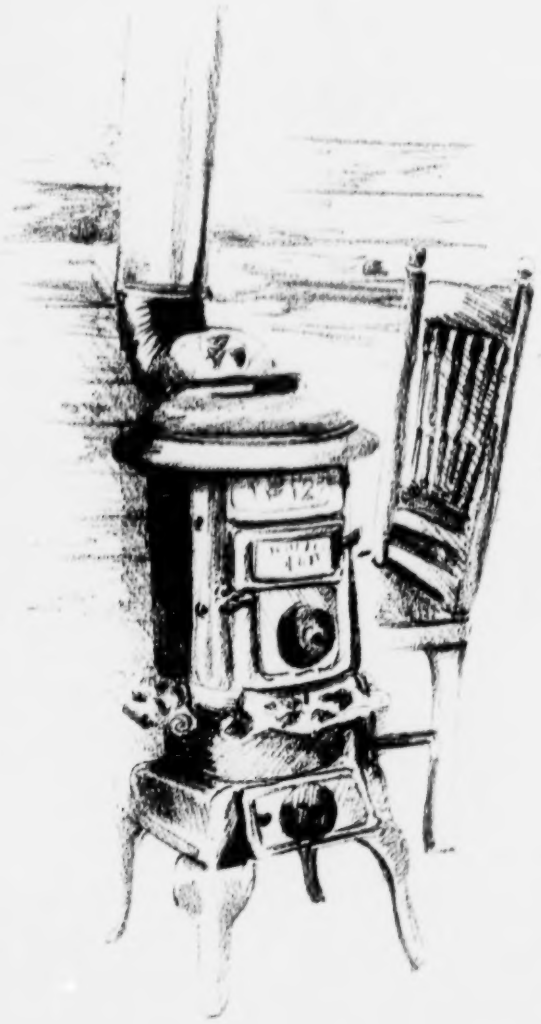
GrantsWeb. GrantsWeb is a starting point for accessing grants-related information and resources on the Internet. GrantsWeb organizes links to grants-related Internet sties and resources, including funding opportunities, grants databases, policy developments, and professional activities: http://www.srainternational.org/cws/sra/resource.htm

Support From Community and Business Leaders

The local school system, for example, might provide for the cost of a few in-service courses that provide graduate credit. Then, the local business community can pitch in. *The Pickens Sentinel*, for example, provides matching support of over $25,000 per year in services since they print a weekly page that costs about $600 and distribute, free of charge, 500 papers among the various Pickens County Schools. *The Pickens Sentinel* benefits from the local writing project because it meets their need to provide an educational service to the community, and it broadens and builds their readership.

The real cost in developing such community service writing initiatives is that teachers and students must have the support they need to learn about writing, their community, and ways to serve. Teachers and students need support. The principal of Summit Elementary in Greenville County, for example, paid for a CWP leader to serve as a year-long consultant for the school as they worked toward building an Upcountry Writers' program. In addition, CWP has a list of qualified teacher-consultants ready to help any school or individual teachers as they begin this process, and CWP can provide their services free of charge since CWP supports its own consultants.

For experienced writing teachers who need less support, they can apply for state humanities grants that usually range in value from about $1,000 to $3,000. Cultural commissions are eager to help local writing initiatives that have a community thrust. Newspapers can provide support through free publishing and distribution. Local businesses or school partners can provide monetary support since they will get name recognition through publicity and their outreach. Selling ads for a community anthology or small monthly newspaper or newsletter is another way to raise money for a service writing project.



Writing Strategies for Our Upcountry

How to Compose a Fine and Publishable Piece

For Clemson's Upcountry Writing Project

You will know you have a fine Upcountry piece if it

_____ (1-4) Has an interesting title alluding to the theme of the piece

_____ (1-4) Relates to our upcountry (a person, group, place, idea, event, experience)

_____ (1-4) Refers to history, geography, music, culture, arts and/or economics of Pickens County

_____ (1-4) Has appropriate structure (one good thesis, theme, point, narrative structure or main idea)

_____ (1-4) Has voice (it sounds like you and reflects who you are).

_____ (1-4) Helps your readers connect to your piece (remember your Pickens Sentinel audience)

_____ (1-4) Has an intriguing lead and thought-provoking conclusion.

_____ (1-4) Is supported with plenty of details, examples, illustrations and/or analogies

(1-4) Includes rich literary devices (sensory details, vivid images, word play, flashbacks, precise word choice).

_____ (1-4) Is written in American Standard English

_____ (1-4) Is typed in Times New Roman 12 point font and double-spaced on Microsoft Word

_____ (1-4) Includes a short bio of the author: name, school, teacher's name, why you chose to write your piece as you did

_____ (2) Includes the CWP's Our Upcountry cover page

_____ (50 total points) Must score at least 45 points to be considered for publication

A score of four (4) means this part of your piece is looking good.
A score of three (3) means this part of your piece is acceptable.
A score of two (2) means this part of your piece needs more work.
A score of one (1) means this part of your piece is not acceptable.

Conclusion

With writing at its center, the Upcountry Writing Project is a program that can expand the art of writing and the engagement of service learning across the curriculum, from elementary students across the grade levels to the teachers themselves. This project allows writing to become the centralized focus of various disciplines while engaging students in meaningful research and productive writing with a real-world application. From saving a natural habitat for wildlife to re-consecrating a graveyard to preserving and learning to cherish cultural treasures, students have found that all important meaning in their writing through the Upcountry Writing Project and service learning.

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Rhea N. Galati, a former journalist, teaches English and Applied Graphics at Habersham Central High School in Mount Airy, Georgia. She serves as eleventh grade chairperson, Literary Coordinator, and yearbook sponsor. The service learning research project she has initiated in her junior English classes has been nominated as the exemplary program for Habersham Central High School, and a summary of the project will be included in a book showcasing the exemplary educational programs in the state of Georgia, soon to be published by the Georgia Department of Education. The program and her students have received local, state, and national attention as her students attempt to make real changes in their own communities. She has completed her coursework and is beginning her dissertation for a degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina.

Dr. Bea Bailey, professor of English education at Clemson University, is co-director of the Upstate Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project. Her book (2001), *Upcountry: Strategies for Writing About Place*, (Berkeley: National Writing Project Press), provides additional methods for helping teachers and students celebrate their communities through the written word. Bea is also connected with Wren High School, a National Service Learning Leader School through her work with NCATE Professional Development Schools. Bea is also at work on her own life project related to a ten-generational settlement saga of the Brethren in the Shenandoah and Blackwater River Valley of Virginia.

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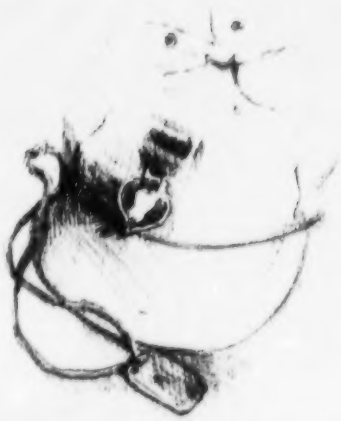

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